

# Learning Bulletin

Incident Title: Safeguard No. 13800544 - High Potential Near Miss – Unsafe electrical practices

## What Happened?

Whilst fixing electrical trunking to a backboard in an electrical panel, a contractor drilled through the back of the panel and made contact with a live 415v busbar. Power was lost to a significant area of process on site necessitating the ordering of tankers and pumps and the declaration of a Level 3 Incident. Electrical supplies were restored at approx. 17:30 the same day. No pollution occurred. No injuries were sustained. One of the contractors later tested positive for THC (Cannabis).

## Why did it really happen?

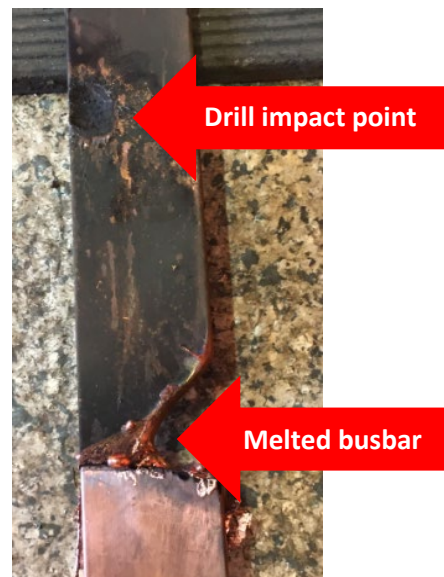
- There was warning signage affixed to the rear of the panels clearly identifying the presence of busbars. This should have prompted a decision to affix the trunking using alternative methods to drilling such as using existing holes for fixings or using other materials such as industrial Velcro or stud welding,
- The panel fitter knew the method was potentially unsafe but continued because he 'assumed' (wrongly) that there was a void in the rear of the panel between the panel wall and the busbar based on previous panels in the same location. The presence of Cannabis in his system may have affected his judgement.
- The supervisor, a qualified electrician who also holds a supervisory qualification was fully aware of the method being used. Because he didn't stop the unsafe method he sanctioned the unsafe behaviour.



Panel front view showing drilled hole



Panel rear view showing melted busbar



## What can I do differently?

- Making 'assumptions' when performing electrical work can be deadly.
- Supervisors need to constantly make sure the control measures to protect against risk are being properly used, maintained and monitored.
- Drugs and alcohol (D&A) are not tolerated on Thames Water sites. All contractors are expected to have D&A testing regimes in place, that are equal to, or better than, Thames Waters.
- It is vital that supervisors are Safety Leaders. A Safety Leader is somebody who not only exhibits personal safe behaviours but inspires others to do the same. These are people who not only follow safety protocols to the letter but speak up in a constructive way when they see that others could be doing something in a safer manner.